

City of Northampton, MA
Urban Forestry Commission (UFC)

December 16, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Submitted By: Debora Laizer

Meeting Called to Order

Richard Parasiliti Jr., Ex-officio Chair called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m. and announced that this virtual meeting would be recorded to the Cloud via the Zoom platform.

Members present and absent/introductions:

Member	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Richard Parasiliti Jr., Ex-officio Chair	X	
Marilyn Castriotta	X	4:37 p.m. 6:00 p.m.
Susan Lofthouse, Vice Chair	X	
Molly Hale	X	
Jennifer Werner	X	
Rob Postel	X	
David Lukens	X	4:38 p.m.
Staff & Visitors	Present	Time if arriving late or leaving early
Debora Laizer, DPW Clerk	X	
Christina Petersen, Visitor	X	
Alex Jarrett, Visitor	X	

Public Comment

- Alex Jarrett, Ward 5 City Councilor expressed concern that a possible loophole could allow builders and/or developers to subdivide a large lot, cut down trees, and then could build 3 single family houses without triggering the Significant Tree Ordinance (STO). Multifamily homes do have to comply with the STO. Alex thanked the UFC for all the work they do.

Review/approve minutes 12/02/20 meeting

- Minutes were reviewed and changes noted.
- A motion was proposed, seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no further discussion.

Motion	Motion By:	Seconded By:	Vote:
To approve the amended 12-02-20 meeting minutes.	Molly Hale	Susan Lofthouse	Yes 6, No 0, Abstain 1

Chair/Tree Warden Report

- The Stoddard Street mitigation has been resolved.
- No other Shade Tree Hearings are scheduled.

Vice Chair Report

- Nothing new to report.

Significant Tree Ordinance

- David Lukens presented a STO Refresher slide show.
 - Marilyn suggested adding a bullet point under the STO Timeline. May 2015, Northampton Public Shade Tree Commission established. The original members had only a short time to review the STO before it was accepted.
 - Molly questioned who can override a site plan approval on ordinance 350-12.3. It was determined that the Planning Board approves the site plan, but the Office of Planning and Sustainability can review it.
 - Solar was not addressed in the Cambridge Property Owner Flyer. Rob suggested reaching out to Andrew Putnam, Director of the Cambridge Tree Programs for more information.
 - Susan questioned who has the discretion in the City of Northampton to determine if a tree can be removed within the special permit process. Rich stated that part of the site plan approval on the special permit is an inventory of all trees on the property that have a 20" or greater DBH. Trees are identified in this inventory as healthy or poor. Rich receives a copy, goes to the site, and reviews what was stated. Mitigation is implemented if it is called for. The mitigation factor gives no incentive for the contractor to work around the trees that are there. Mitigation money is managed by the Planning and Sustainability Department and is used for tree planting projects.
 - Jennifer inquired as to what triggers a site plan review. Rich responded with any construction over 2000 square feet will require a site plan approval through the Planning Board. Shared driveways also require a site plan. No site plan is needed if the minimum frontage of 50 feet and the zoning requirements are met.
- Proposed suggestions on how to modify the STO.
 - Lowering the DBH to 8" or 10".
 - Get the Planning Department and the Planning and Sustainability Departments input.
 - Create a higher mitigation fee like the trench permit penalty. Possible exception for affordable housing.
- There are two ways to present the new wording to City Council. The Mayor can support the amended STO and he present it to City Council, or a City Councilor could bring it to City Council, and it could be legislated that way.
- The newly formed STO Subcommittee members will be Susan, Christine, David, and Rich.
- STO Subcommittee updates and suggestions should be added as an agenda item.

STO Subcommittee

- A motion was proposed that the Urban Forestry Commission make a subcommittee to further study the STO and communicate with the Office of Planning & Sustainability and the Planning Board, seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no further discussion.

Motion	Motion By:	Seconded By:	Vote:
To form a STO Subcommittee	Molly Hale	David Lukens	Yes 7, No 0, Abstain 0

2020 to 2021 Goal & Objectives

Molly created a 2021 Goals Proposal document which Rich supplied to all committee members. Growth Award 2021 proposals were tabled to the next meeting.

Ongoing Project Status

- Planting Plan Fall 2020
 - Rob announced that season is now over for planting. Rich & Rob are working on creating lists and identifying trees for next spring. One hundred trees have been tagged from Amherst Nursery for next year's spring planting.
- Downtown Tree Siting
 - Molly and Susan finished half of Susan quadrant.
 - David and Marilyn are one hour away from finishing their quadrant.
 - Rob and Christina are finding it difficult to finish their quadrant with snow on the ground.

Any other business not anticipated by the Chair

- Nothing new to add.

To Do List

- Dispensed to next meeting.
- A motion was proposed, seconded and a roll call vote was taken. There was no further discussion.

Motion	Motion By:	Seconded By:	Vote:
To adjourn.	Susan Lofthouse	Jennifer Werner	Yes 6, No 0, Abstain 0

Meeting adjourned at 6:01 p.m.